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ABSTRACT

Procedures for internationalizing a college academic unit are examined. The approach centers around eight key steps in organizational development: developing organizational support groups; assessing the international/intercultural needs of the organization; making maximum use of existing strengths and international resources; developing programs and services to address weak areas; obtaining money and other resources to implement international programs and services; evaluating the effectiveness of the programs and services; and infusing an international perspective into existing programs and courses. Establishing a faculty committee on international/intercultural education is important in order to provide participants "committee work" credit. The committee needs to formulate its role and objectives and to identify the needs and interests of the target audiences, which can be used to plan programs, activities, and services. In addition, a programs and services blueprint should be prepared for each audience. For each goal, a summary should be written of what was attempted, the extent to which the goal was achieved, and evidence supporting the conclusions, along with recommendations for the next academic year. (SW)

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ABSTRACT

Practical Procedures for Internationalizing an Academic Unit

by Gail Hughes

This article summarizes the main points of a workshop given at the March, 1981 SIETAR conference in Vancouver, B.C. SIETAR stands for "Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research."

Procedures for internationalizing an academic unit center around eight key steps in organizational development: developing organizational support groups; assessing the international/intercultural needs of your organization; making maximum use of existing strengths and international resources; developing programs and services to address weak areas; obtaining money and other resources to implement international programs and services; evaluating the effectiveness of your programs and services; and the especially tough area of infusing an international perspective into existing programs and courses.

These steps can be adapted to the needs of your particular situation to stimulate an international perspective and provide international/intercultural activities, services, and resources relevant to your academic unit.

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Practical Procedures for Internationalizing an Academic Unit

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(Note: This article presents the main points of a workshop Gail gave at the March, 1981 SIETAR conference in Vancouver, B.C. SIETAR stands for the "Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research".)

Although most universities have a number of effective international organizations on campus, few groups have arisen to serve specific Colleges, Departments, or other program units. However, each College has somewhat different international education needs, especially in regard to its academic focus. In addition, "local" organizations are closer to their clientele and may be able to reach many who do not have the motivation to participate in university-wide organizations. If international education is to reach the vast majority of students and faculty on campus, grassroots efforts at the academic unit level will be an essential supplement to existing campus-wide efforts. So, if nothing is happening in your unit, why not get something started?

Since every academic unit has different goals and different resources, specific procedures for providing international programs and services will differ according to the situation. However, below are 8 key steps which can be adapted to help "internationalize" your unit.

1) Develop an organizational support group

Probably the first thing you should do is to bring together a core group of those interested in international activity in your unit. Most Colleges at the "U" do not have a faculty committee on international education, but you might encourage your Dean to establish one so that participants could get "committee work" credit. Even if no formal committee is on the horizon, every College has a lot of "closet internationalists"- faculty, U.S. students, and international students - who are just waiting for the chance to channel their interests in this area. Round up the ones you know, they will know of others, and your group will grow as news of it spreads. This will be the group which should participate in steps #2-8 below and adapt them to the specific needs of your unit.

2) Assess the international/intercultural needs of your unit

Identify the needs and interests of the "target audiences" you wish to reach. It is very useful to prepare a grid with "audiences" down one side, their "needs and interests" across the other. You will probably find that each audience has some special needs, but that there are some held in common, as well. What existing resources are available to meet the needs of each audience? In each box on your grid, write in the names of organizations or other resources addressing that audience's need or interest. This will give you a good overview which will make it possible to recognize strong and weak areas pertaining to internationalism in your unit.

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3) Have your committee or support group identify its role, purpose, and goals

Consider the "audience needs and interests grid" you prepared. Which areas might be appropriate for your group to take on? You will probably want to concentrate on weak areas where few resources are presently available, but you may also want to promote or supplement existing efforts, as explained in Step #5 below. If your group is College or Department-based, a major (if not the major) role is likely to be to promote and provide for international interests pertaining to professional education in your field (i.e. for educators if you are in Education, for agricultural economists if you are in Agricultural Economics, etc.). The most important one or ones you select will help define your group's purpose. Specific audience needs and interests often form the basis of the goals you will identify to help you achieve your purpose. Identifying your role, purpose and goals will provide focus for your programs and services, making them more efficient and effective.

4) Make maximum use of existing strengths and resources

Just because resources are available doesn't mean they are used to full advantage. Even in "strong" areas, your audience's interests are not being met unless they know where and when to go for what, and feel free to do so. One of your support group's goals should be to communicate information about existing programs and resources, supplement or lend support to existing programs, and establish a liaison with other international organizations on campus and perhaps also in the community.

5) Develop programs and services to address weak areas

Your group will also be able to use its "audience needs and interests grid" as the basis for planning programs, activities, and services. With audiences, needs/interests, goals, and existing resources specified on the grid, areas of greatest priority should become apparent. Ideas for addressing these areas should also come easily.

Prepare a "programs and services blueprint" for each of your audiences. Put the name of the audience on the left side, with goals or topics (goal or subgoal areas) across the top. Under each goal, list programs and services which you plan to address the goal. If your activities will only partially meet the goal, but will be supplemented by external resources, once more make mention of those resources and their location. You will probably expect that certain activities (such as social hours, bag lunch sessions, informal seminars, etc.) will attract all or several of your audiences, whereas each audience will also have unique needs that will require special-interest mailings and services.

This "programs and services blueprint" will provide you will exactly that - a blueprint of what your group plans to do to meet its goals. There may be too much to implement in a year or even longer, in which case you will need to select what to do first. This could be done either on the basis of goal priorities (implementing activities in areas of highest goal priority first) or by selecting one or several activities for each goal to work on first. In either case, the blueprint will help ensure that your group doesn't lose sight of the total picture of what you're trying to do and why.

6) Obtain money and other resources to implement programs and services

An amazing amount can be done with very little money. Some, however, will be needed. The absolute rock-bottom would be approximately $600 per academic year for one 1/4-time student assistant on the Work-Study program (which provides 4/5 of an eligible student's salary), plus supplies, stamps, and secretarial services. However, an experienced and committed 1/2-time student would be a necessary minimum if your group intends to make any real progress in organizational development. In addition, you will need to recruit the volunteer efforts of both those on your committee and others (faculty, students, and sometimes, perhaps, community members). An internship that would offer credit and experience would be one way to encourage student involvement. If you are interested in hiring an international student, an ISWOP (Int'l. Student Work Opportunity Program) student can be hired for only 1/3 of the salary, ISWOP providing a 2/3 of salary supplement. As with Work-Study, however, ISWOP students must pass eligibility requirement. Check with OIP for opportunities to obtain grant money for special projects. Sources of grant money: federal - including Title XII; state; University development grants; and foundations. Through a combination of departmental or college money, grants, interns, volunteers, Work-Study/ISWOP, and possibly some fee-for-service projects, you should be able to get something going, no matter how small a start, and - more important - keep it going, building bit by bit from year to year.

7) Infuse an international/intercultural perspective into programs and courses

This is the most difficult area to tackle, and yet is potentially the most important. Organizing specialized programs of an international nature is easy in comparison with stimulating an international perspective in existing courses which do not have an international focus, but the latter task is essential if we are to reach the vast majority of students. Perhaps the best way to be of assistance in this area is to:

a) Make it as easy as possible for faculty who are already interested by meeting their requests for information and assistance, either directly or by putting them in contact with other individuals and organizations;

b) Provide recognition and visibility for those with accomplishments in international education or research, to emphasize the importance of these achievements and to spark ideas as to what can be done in various academic areas (both disciplinary and interdisciplinary);

c) Disseminate information pertaining to international and intercultural opportunities, to entice as many as possible into taking advantage of these opportunities;

d) Enlist the assistance of a friendly Dean or administrative committee in providing more incentives (or at least removing disincentives!) for faculty participation in international research, in facilitating faculty sabbaticals and exchanges and credits for student study abroad, and in discussing the need for additional international-oriented courses in your academic unit.

Along with the formation of your support group (which will probably have at least some faculty on it), these activities and services should at least be a start, and hopefully will have a "ripple effect."

8) Evaluate the effectiveness of your programs and services

For the kinds of activities you will probably be involved in, where participation is voluntary and where different people take part in different programs, it is very difficult to determine the extent to which your goals have been reached. However, using an "activities blueprint" will ensure that each of your goals and audiences is at least addressed. "Opinionnaires" and attendance data can provide information as to which formats and topics were most popular. But beyond that - to ascertain the educational and service effects of your activities on the unit as a whole - some baseline data must have been obtained to identify where you were starting from. Even with that, it's very tricky. If you're really interested, check with me for ideas concerning baseline data I've collected for the College of Education. You will also need to consult an expert in program evaluation.

For each of your goals, write a summary of what was attempted, to what extent you think the goal was achieved, evidence (however impressionistic) supporting your conclusion, and recommendations for the next year's activities in this goal area. All of your audiences should be considered in this analysis, to ensure that each receives as much attention as intended. Although your conclusions may rest on flimsy evidence, this analysis will stimulate you to think about your activities and will make planning for the next year a breeze.

If you would like more specific information about these procedures, please drop a note or phone me at the Teacher Center (155 Peik Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455; (612) 376-4580). A booklet of examples drawn from the experiences of the International Education Committee and the Teacher Center of the College of Education is available upon request.

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